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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

No. 20 TORONTO October, 1942

MEAT, NOW AND THEN

Game will augment our meat supply. Ontario's Department of Game and Fisheries has made adjustments in regulations so that native wildlife from ducks to deer can do its bit. The moose and the white-tailed deer, the bulkiest of our game, can aid materially in the present emergency. The Woodland caribou is now too scarce to count.

There was a time when other large hoofed animals roamed our province. The wapiti, or American elk, occurred in southern Ontario as late as the seventeenth century. Thousands of years ago the large, long-haired Arctic musk ox was present, according to Dr. M.A. Fritz of the Royal Ontario Museum. A skull in the Museum's collection was uncovered in a glacial deposit on Weston Road near Toronto.

During the glacial period, Arctic animals advanced southward along with the changing borders of the great ice sheet. The glacier paused for a considerable time around what is now Lake Ontario. Herds of musk ox roamed the terrain where our great cities now stand. Meat and cold storage were not lacking in those days.

EVERYBODY'S SCHOOL

The schools are open again. Faces are washed more carefully; shoes and school bags are found again after long disuse. Troops of school children are visiting the galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum. Here they see actual objects of historic, scientific and artistic interest and obtain a much more vivid idea of such things than word or picture can give. Old as well as young find information and inspiration at the Museum. It is everybody's school.

ROCK THAT BENDS

Most rocks will bend a little, the amount being determined only by microscopic measurements. There is, however, a peculiar sandstone, called itacolumite, that can quite easily be bent by hand. In the Royal Ontario Museum there is a two-foot slab, an inch thick, that sags about half an inch by its own weight. This strange characteristic is believed to be caused by the interlocking of the quartz grains of which the sandstone is composed, or by included scales of mica or talc that allow the quartz grains to slide over one another.

The association of diamonds with itacolumite in Brazil has led to great hopes and disappointments in various other parts of the world where this type of sandstone is found, but the relationship does not seem to hold true elsewhere. In fact, aside from its uniqueness as a phenomenon, flexible sandstone appears to have no particular value.

HITLER STOLE THE SWASTIKA

The Swastika doesn't belong to Hitler or even exclusively to the "Aryans". It is one of the oldest decorative motifs belonging to mankind and has been used in many lands through countless years. Until recently it was considered an emblem of good luck just as potent as a four-leafed clover.

A Swastika hunt through the galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum will prove this. In the Greek galleries you will find this hooked cross on vases that were made about 800 years before Christ and also on a large brooch of the same period. The motif was carried on in the art of Mediterranean lands and can be seen on a beautiful embroidered curtain that was made on one of the Greek Islands in the 18th century. If the chase is pursued through the other galleries more examples will be found on oriental rugs, Indian pottery made in the south-western United States, and worked into the textile and porcelain designs of China.

The Museum's largest Buddha figure has a raised Swastika on its chest. This symbol was also used in the ancient art of Mesopotamia and in view of Hitler's persecution of the Jews, it is interesting to find that in early times it was used in Semitic art.

We may add to Hitler's list of crimes the theft of the motif that he uses on all his banners.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR ENVOYS

Thousands of Canadian-born are now making their way southward. Some will visit the United States. Others will journey on to Mexico, or to the Islands of the Caribbean. Still others will winter in the Republics of South America. All will spread goodwill. These envoys are the birds.

According to ornithologists of the Royal Ontario Museum, bird migration in the autumn is slow and inconspicuous, quite unlike the phenomenon of spring. The arrival of the first robin on your lawn last March was surely evident but the same bird's departure this autumn will go unnoticed. Most people gradually come to realize that the birds are gone.

Do you remember the long chain of swallows perched on telephone wires along country roads last July? Do you remember when the bobolink stopped singing in the hay meadows? Even then these birds were assembling for the long journey. Subsequently there has been a quiet procession passing southward, by day and by night. The freeze-up will stimulate the tardy - sparrows, hawks and ducks - to do likewise. But these international envoys will be back with good-will for Canadians in the spring.

Open WEEK DAYS except MONDAY 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SUNDAYS 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.